RETURNING YOUR TRUST

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In the Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

PREFACE

How would you react if you were to see a child coming barefoot and about to step onto a tiny, burning ember shouldering on the ground? Obviously, you would, at once, rush to the child and sweep him off into your arms. And, what a huge sense of relief and satisfaction would you experience by thus drawing him away from the flames!

In much the same way, if a man were about to be burnt and torched up in a fire, you would be terribly upset... Your heart, your whole being, would reach out to him in agony and compassion. Ever thought why this happens? It happens because all of us, men and women, are offspring's of the same parents, the same first couple who first inhabited earth. But this happens because of another reason too, a reason which lies cradled in our heart. Yes, the heart. Each of us has a beautiful heart that beats, and this heart is a brim with love, compassion and mercy. This heart writhes and bleeds at another's pain, and blossoms forth like a flower with joy while helping others. Such is our heart in its original state. It follows, then, that a true human being is he who holds, in his heart, a love for entire mankind. Every act of such a person becomes an act of service to the human race. He gets restless at someone's pain and sorrow. To erase that pain, somehow, becomes his urgent concern and immediate objective of life.

Man's life in this world is transient and too short-lived. Post-death, he will get another life which is permanent. In that after-life, he cannot attain paradise if he has not worshipped and obeyed his true Master, the One God. Rather, he will have to become a fuel of hell-fire forever. Today, millions of people are in the race for becoming the fuel of the blazing hell-fire. They are blundering up a path that heads straight into hell. In such a scenario, it is a case of conscience for all lovers of humanity who believe in the human bond, to come forward and discharge their obligation of salvaging those who are heading towards hell.

The author of this book Muhammad Kaleem Siddiqui is a person consumed with a passion and compassion to rescue men from that fire. In this book, he has placed some flowers in your hands, and his love for mankind can be clearly felt in them. He has taken the call of duty by presenting them, a duty that is due upon all of us as true humans.

With these words, I place before you these pieces of a heart and return to you what is your's, your trust, your legacy.

Wasi Sulaiman Nadwi,
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MY APOLOGIES…

My Dear Readers! Please forgive me. I apologize to you. On my own behalf and on behalf of the entire Muslim community, I sincerely apologize for not handing over to you your greatest wealth. This happened due to the trappings of Satan. Satan planted in our hearts a

disregard for the sinner instead of a disregard for the sin; and he thus converted the entire world into one huge battle-field. A realization of our failure propelled me to pick the pen today with the intention of delivering your due right back to you and to say a few words of love and fellow-feeling free from any self-interest.

As I place these pages in your hands, He Who is the Real Master Who knows the state of each heart is a Witness, here and now, that I truly wish to do that which my sincere concern for you, demands of me. The distress at not being able to reach out to you so far, has given me many sleepless nights. You have a heart. Turn to it and ask it about the truth of my words. The heart always speaks the truth.

A WORD OF LOVE

Needless to say, it is my deep desire that you see and read my words of love through eyes of love. For God's sake, for the sake of the Master and Creator of this world, please stop and ponder awhile so that my heart and soul may get some peace in the thought that I have delivered a 'trust' back to a brother or a sister and, thus, acquitted myself of an obligation which was due upon me as a human.

I now wish to convey to you a beautiful fact.. This fact, in reality, is the greatest truth of which man needs to be conscious and which he needs to believe in after stepping into this world. And, to be aware of this truth is man's responsibility too. I wish to speak to you about this lovely truth.

NATURE'S GREATEST TRUTH

Nature's greatest truth, the supreme truth of this cosmos, is that the Creator and Organizer of the universe and its creatures is the One and only One Master, One God.

He is sole and singular in all His qualities. None else is His associate or partner in creating and managing this world, in creating all creatures and in giving them life and death. He is a Power Who is Omni-present, Omniscient. He hears all, sees all. Not a leaf stirs sans His consent. Every man's soul, inner being, acknowledges this. Be he a believer in One God or a worshipper of idols, he surely knows deep down within him and believes that the Nourished and the Real Master is but 'One' only.

A person's intellect too refuses to accept anything other than this that the world's Master and Creator is One. The logic is plain. Take the case of the school which has two Principals or a village having two Heads. They cannot function at all. Their functioning is disrupted and in turmoil. For that matter, a nation too cannot have two kings or two Presidents or Prime-ministers. How, then, can the affairs of such a vast universe be managed by more than One God or by many masters? How, then, can there be many directors and managers of the world?

HERE IS THE EVIDENCE

God's own declaration, His own Word is the first evidence (of His Oneness). Yes, His Word – the Quran. But in order to prove that the Quran is the word of God, in the first place, the Quran itself threw a challenge-cum-clincher thus:

"And if you are in doubt concerning that which We have sent down (i.e., the Quran) to our slave, then produce a chapter like it thereof and (for doing this work) call all your people besides God, if you are truthful." (Quran-2-23)

Fourteen hundred summers have passed by since this challenge was issued. People around the world researched, using Science and now computers too, but gave up. None could take up this challenge or bring together a case to establish that the Quran is not the Word of God.

The Quran presented 1400 years back the scientific facts (like DNA, the origin of the universe and Big Bang, embryology, particles smaller than atoms, sub-atomic particles, the expansion and final implosion of the universe, the birth place of stars, black holes, recording of sounds and images, the atmospheric layers and a hundred other scientific facts) which have been discovered only now, proving that the Quran is from God, the Knower and creator of these facts. It is this true book that vouches for God's Oneness.

In this book (the Quran), God has furnished many arguments, evidences and touch-stones directed at out intellect. And, these evidences testify to His Oneness. Here is one such argument:

"Had there been many gods (and masters) of the heavens and the earth then there would have been great turmoil and unrest." (Quran)

Simple logic! Had there been many gods, the scenario would have been something like this: One god would order that night should set in but another god would insist that it should be day-time. One god would decide that the span of a day would be six months while another would decide differently. Yet another god would want the sun to rise in the west but one of the gods would disagree and say, "No, the sun will rise in the east."

Had there many gods sharing the One Supreme God's powers, decisions and management, then again the scene would be somewhat like this: A man would pray to the rain-god for rains. The rain-god would accept his supplication. But, suddenly, another god would disagree and would command that there will be no rain. Then, the subordinate rain-god would go on strike in protest. Meanwhile, the people would be waiting for day-break but it would turn out that the sun-god was on strike.

A TRUE TESTIMONY

The plain and sober truth is that everything in the universe and its harmonious, organized functioning, speaks for itself and testifies to the

fact that there is One and only One Master of this universe. He can do, at one command, whatever He wishes any time, anywhere. He can neither be visualized in imagination or thoughts nor can he be depicted in images. Lo! He created the heavens and the earth, the entire cosmos only to put them at the service of mankind! The sun serves us! The winds serve us! This earth too is at our disposal. Fire, water and all inanimate and animate creation, apart from our own species, of course, have seen daylight only to be put to our service and use. Eureka! God crowned man as the chief and leader of all these things and created him as His slave only, to worship and obey Him.

It is only fair, then, that an honest person should utilize his life and possessions according to the wishes of his Master Who alone gives him life and death, nourishes him with food, water and all other requirements of life. Now, despite this, if a person does not employ his life in following His Master's commands, then surely such a person is not worthy of being called a human.

A PRIME TRUTH

The True Master has laid out a bare truth in His true book, the Quran: "Everyone shall taste of death. Then unto US you shall be returned." (Quran-29-57)

This verse has two parts. The first part mentions that every human soul has to surely experience death. This is a reality which every man believes, whatever his religion, sect or region may be. In fact, even those who don't believe in religion, the atheists, too acknowledge the reality of death. Animals too understand this fact. A mouse flees at the sight of a cat. A dog bolts at the sight of an approaching truck. Why? Because they believe in death.

AFTER DEATH

The second part of the above-mentioned verse of the Quran, states another absolute reality. If only man could grasp it! If he could perceive

this one reality to the hair, the world's social environment and circumstances would change overnight. This absolute truth is: After death, you will meet God, yes, face to face, and will be handed out your dues (rewards or penalties) according to your deeds of this life.

It is not true that, once your body has disintegrated in the mud after death, you will not be raised up again. It is also not true that, after death, your soul will enter someone's body. This idea does not pass the litmus test of man's own intellect.

First of all, this whole concept of re-incarnation or transmigration of souls (also known as 'awagaman') is not mentioned in the Vedas (Hindu holy books). We can trace it only in the later religious books – the Puranas. This reference too merely mentions that a person's genetic characteristics embedded in his genes are transferred down the generations genetically from father to son and so on.

Actually, the roots of the notion and belief in re-incarnation and transmigration of souls, lie elsewhere: An artificial hierarchy of superior and inferior divisions developed in society. Of course, this was the handiwork of Satan's machinations. The high-point was that this hierarchy was erected in the name of religion. The self-appointed patrons of religion took obeisance from the 'Shudras' whom they considered lowly. Now, these down-trodden and crushed souls questioned the religious representatives, putting the million dollar question thus: "When God our Creator has granted equal faculties, eyes, nose, etc equally to all humans, why do you make yourself superior and us inferior?"

The reply of the religious leaders was interesting. They justified the system of social divisions by dishing out this theory of transmigration of souls. They explained the injustice meted out to some thus: They said, "Your bad deeds of your past life are responsible for your inferior position now!"

As per their theory, souls are born again in the world. They return inside different bodies according to their past -life deeds. Those with

bad past-life deeds are born again as animals (or low castes or with physical defects) while those with the worst deeds are re-born in the form of vegetation. Those with good past-life accounts escape the cycle of re-birth or transmigration and they gain salvation (moksha).

THREE PROOFS AGAINST TRANS-MIGRATION OF SOULS

1. The foremost proof, in this matter, is that the international community of scholars, scientists and researchers concur unanimously on the view that the first to appear on our planet were plants, followed by animals. Humans were born millions of years after that. Now, the question is: If man had not yet appeared on the scene and, hence, had not yet committed any vice or virtue, then from where did souls take re-birth in the form of plants and animals?
2. Secondly, if we accept the idea of transmigration of souls, then it should result in a constant decrease in population caused by a reduction caused by those souls who never return and gain salvation. But, the reality is just the reverse. There is a constant increase in the population of humans, animals and plant -life too.
3. Thirdly, there is a huge difference in the number of births and deaths. The birth-rate is more than the death-rate. Interestingly, sometimes a million mosquitoes are born while only a few die.

Have we not all heard of cases wherein a child suddenly claims to recognize a house or location as the place where he lived in his past life? He also gives his past-life name and declares that he has taken re-birth. How do we explain this? The answer is simple: This is nothing but a machination of Satan and jinns who speak thus through children and try to damage man’s faith. (Science attributes this behaviour to the phenomenon of the collective unconscious)

The hard truth is that no sooner does a person breathe his last; he faces the greatest reality – the reality of returning directly to His Master

and getting a full recompense for his good or bad deeds which he committed in this life.

ACTIONS WILL BEAR FRUIT

A person, who works the oracle here, performs deeds of merit and walks the path of virtue here, will tread the enchanted grounds of paradise there, after death. And, in Paradise, he will find every imaginable and unimaginable object of comfort, bliss and luxury and treats and pleasures such as no man has ever imagined, no eye has seen or no ear has ever heard of. Nay, not even a thought of such a Paradise crossed any heart or mind. But wait! Hold your breath! The greatest gift and pleasure of Paradise will be the sight of the Master, the One God Whom the residents of Paradise will see directly. Nothing will be more blissful and pleasurable than this experience.

Now, we also have people with bad report cards. Their poor performance, evil doings and defiance of God here, will land them in Hell. There they will go through the fiery chastisement and retribution for their sins. They will burn in blazing fires there. But – the greatest of all their punishments will be that they will not be allowed to see God. There, in the midst of hell-fire, they will drain the cup of misery and suffer painful torments.

POLYTHEISM - THE GREATEST SIN

The One True God informed us in the Quran that good deeds can be big or small, and sins too can be major or minor. However, He also declared something exceptional in this regard: He informed us that there is <u>one sin</u> which is the greatest and it will draw maximum punishment and He will <u>NEVER-NEVER</u> forgive such a sinner who comes along with this Capital sin. Such a man or woman will burn in

hell-fire forever and ever. He or she will not get death there either (to end the torment).

That master-sin is to accept someone or something as a partner of the One God and Master, to bow and humble yourself before someone else, to fold hands and supplicate to anything or anyone else too, to consider someone else too to be worthy of worship and obeisance and to be convinced that something or someone else too has the power to grant life or death, profit or loss or livelihood.

This, in effect, is the master-sin. This sin is in itself the greatest oppression, corruption and outrage. To even consider that an idol or the sun, moon, stars, some ascetic, fakir or saint is worthy of worship, is something that God will never forgive.

He might, if He so desires, forgive other sins but not this one. Our own intellect, our logical mind too holds this sin to be vile and repulsive.

A CASE IN POINT

Consider the case of this man whose wife is engaged in a regular tussle with him. She argues abuses and absolutely refuses any truce with him. Eventually, the man asks her to move out, whereupon she says to him, "I am yours only and shall ever remain so. I shall live and die here and I promise never to leave your house, not for a moment."

The result: Despite his fury, the man is compelled to compromise and continue with the relationship.

On the other hand, there is a wife, extremely docile, caring and duty-conscious. She serves her man a hot dinner even if he turns up at midnight and gladdens his heart with tender affection. One day, this woman turns around and says to her husband, "Look here, just having you is not sufficient for me. I need that neighbour of mine too as a husband."

Now, if the husband has an iota of self-respect, he will not tolerate this. In fact, he would either kill her or kill himself.

Why does he react in this manner? You guessed it right. No man on earth can wish to have a rival or a partner in his marital rights as a husband. Just imagine! A man created from a humble drop of water, cannot tolerate a partner along with himself! How, then, can God the Master Who created man from this humble and impure drop of water, tolerate or permit that man should ascribe a partner to Him and worship someone else too? How can God stand this when the fact remains that He alone is the Provider of all of man's possessions?

Another case in point, here, is a prostitute. She plunges into degradation and dishonour for the sole reason that she sells her honour to anyone and everyone. In the same manner, a person who worships others be they idols, deities, humans or anything else, falls from God's grace, and he is worse than the prostitute who fell into disgrace. (She at-least realizes her sin)

NEGATION OF IDOLATORY IN THE QURAN

The Quran presents an allegory about idol-worship. It is thought-worthy. It runs thus:

"The things which you worship besides God, they cannot, together, create even a fly; far from creating it, they cannot take back something which the fly might lift away from them. How feeble are those that are worshipped and how feeble are the worshippers. And they did not realize God (His Power) as they should have; He is Most Powerful and One Who can do anything." (Quran)

What an amazing and beautiful example! As for these idols which we have crafted with our own hands, it is we who have sculpted them. If these idols had any sense, they would have worshipped us!

A FLIMSY IDEA

Some people argue that they worship others besides God just because these ‘others’ lead them to God. They say that they gain God’s favours through them and through the idols. This argument is very much like the case of a man at the railway station. This man inquired from a porter about his train. When the porter informed him about the details of the train, the man leaped onto the porter’s shoulders instead of boarding the train. He argued that he did so because it was, after all, the porter who gave him information about the train! To worship someone who gives information about God, instead of worshipping God, is as ridiculous as the action of the man who climbed onto the porter instead of climbing into the train.

There are some brothers who argue that they keep idols to ensure concentration of attention towards God (during worship). Now, this is indeed strange! This is much like the case of a man who is staring at a dog. He insists that he is doing so in order to concentrate attention on the thought of his father! But, there is no relation between the dog and his father. Similarly, where is the relation between a weak idol and that All-Powerful, Merciful and Compassionate Master? Will the act of looking at an idol ensure concentration of attention towards God or cause distraction?

In essence, the conclusion is that it is the greatest of all sins to attribute partners to God. God will never pardon this particular sin. Anybody guilty of this sin will become fuel of hell-fire for eternity.

FAITH - THE SUPREME VIRTUE

Faith is the greatest of all virtues, the essence of all that is good and worthy. Everyone, adhering to any religion, believes that it is only faith that a person carries with him after death while he abandons all his possessions behind him. A person of faith, a ‘Faithful’ is he who hands

over to others their due rights. On the other hand, he who usurps others' rights is termed an 'oppressor'.

Now, the greatest right over us is that of our Creator. And what is this greatest right that He has over us? This right is that we should worship Him alone and accept Him only as the Master, the Giver of profit or loss, honour or dishonour. And why so? Because HE alone is the Creator, Nourisher, Provider and Giver of life and death. Yes, this is His greatest right on us - that we spend this God-given life as per His wishes and obey Him alone. This, in essence, is faith (Imaan). A person cannot be a "Faithful', a person of faith, without accepting Him alone as the only Master and without submitting to Him. Rather, such a person would be termed 'faithless'.

The example of a person who usurps this greatest right of the Creator and yet claims to be a 'man of faith' is similar to the case of a dacoit who commits a major robbery and becomes a millionaire. Then, one day, he walks up to a shop to return a coin and says magnanimously to the shopkeeper, "Take this coin back. I got it extra from you by mistake."

Bizarre, isn't it? If, returning a single paise after committing a major plunder, is his 'faith' and 'honesty', then it would be a worse faith, indeed, to worship someone else instead of one's own Master.

Faith, in effect, means only one thing: that you accept that your Master is only One and that you worship Him alone and spend each moment of your life in implementing His wishes and commands. True faith really means that you spend the life given by Him according to His wishes. To reject His commands is 'irreligion' and faithlessness.

THE TRUE RELIGION

True religion has always been one ever since the dawn of time. This one and true religion always taught the same thing – that we accept and

believe in the ‘One and Only God’, worship Him alone and obey His commands. The Quran says:

“Truly, the religion with God is Islam.” (Quran- 3-19)

“And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted of him, and in the hereafter he will be one of the losers.” (Quran – 3-85)

It is a human shortcoming that man’s faculties have boundaries and limits. His eyes do see but not beyond a distance. He can hear but only within a certain range. His powers of smell, taste and touch too have their limits. These five senses provide man with information. But, his mind too has its own constraints. It cannot perceive or answer some questions such as: What kind of life does God, His Master, prefer for Him? In what manner should he worship God? What will happen after death? Which are the actions which will take him to paradise or, alternately, to hell? A person cannot, on his own, answer these posers.

THE PROPHETS

God, in His Mercy, turned towards this shortcoming and disability of man. He sent messages and guidance to some select, noble souls through angels. These men, the prophets, conveyed the art of living and the ways of worship. They unveiled to people those truths of life which were out of bounds of the intellect.

These men were known as prophets and messengers. They could also be called ‘Avtaars’ provided the term ‘Avtaar’ means ‘one on whom something has been sent down or revealed’. These days, the term ‘Avtaar’ is generally taken to mean ‘God or God in the guise of man’. This is an absolute fallacy and a major sin too. This delusion wrenches man away from worship of One God and Master and lands him straight into the quick-sand of idol-worship.

These great men, the prophets and messengers, selected by God to blaze out the true path for mankind, appeared in every region and nation

and in all times and climes. Each of them instructed the people to believe in and worship none but One God only and to abide by the code and way of life which they brought and spend their lives according to His wishes. Not one of these prophets invited men to worship anyone other than the One God. On the contrary, they made every effort to drag people away from this sin (of polytheism). People accepted their teachings and began treading the true path.

THE ORIGIN OF IDOL - WORSHIP

The prophets were mortals after all. They died. (There is no death for God only)

Their death aroused strong sentiments of grief, love and memories in their followers after them. The people missed them, mourned them, wept in their memory. This was the break, the golden chance for Satan, and he pounced upon it. Recall that he was man's enemy. God had given him the power to whisper evil thoughts into man's heart and mind and to tempt and lead him astray. Of course, God wanted to test man to see who obeyed Him and who followed Satan.

Now, Satan got his chance. He approached the grieving people and said, "You love your prophets but, now that they are dead, you are unable to see them. But, I will ensure that you can still see them. I'll carve out their statues. You can then look at the statues and gain peace."

The statues were made. The people would gaze at them at their will. By and by, a deep regard and love for these statues grew in their hearts. Another opening for Satan! He approached them again and whispered, "Believe me, if you bow to these statues, you will find God in them."

The people's hearts, already a brim with love for these idols, readily bowed to them and soon began worshipping them. Lo! Man, who was meant to worship One God only, began worshipping idols. And, before he knew it, he was caught in the trap of polytheism.

When this happened, when man, the leader and chief of this world, stooped down to bow to stones and dust, he lost his honour and fell into degradation. He fell from God's grace and became a fuel for the fires of hell till the end of time.

Now, God sent more prophets again. They came to unhook people from idol-worship and to stop them from worshipping anything other than God. Some people accepted their exhortations. Some did not. Those who did gained God's pleasure. But grave, divine decisions were taken, decisions of destruction for those who spurned the prophets' advice. They were obliterated off the face of the earth.

THE MAXIM OF THE PROPHETS

The prophets kept coming continuously in quick succession. A common premise and the same thread ran through their teachings. They invited people to one and the same religion and the same principles (the principles of Oneness of God, life after death, accountability of actions after death, heaven, hell and God's messages sent to mankind through prophets)

Each of them said: "Believe in One God. Do not conjoin anyone with God or His qualities. Do not make anyone a partner in His worship. Accept all His prophets as His true prophets and all His angels as His pure creatures who do not eat or sleep but merely execute His commands. Accept and believe the revelations, the scriptures which He sent through the angels, to be true. Believe also in the plain truth that, after death, you will surely be handed out your recompense for your virtues and vices. Finally, have faith that all positive or negative happenings in life are part of destiny and are from God. So, follow the way of life and the religious code which I have brought."

All the prophets were true. All the scriptures revealed to them were true. We believe in each of them, and do not discriminate between them. But – there is a question: What is the proof that these prophets were actually the true and genuine prophets of God? The proof of their

truth and authenticity is in this that they be tested on the litmus stone of this one principle: The teachings of these men, who invited people to believe in One God, must not contain any talk of worshipping anyone else or worshipping their own selves, except God.

Now, if the teachings of some religious personalities today contain a sanction for idol – worship or worship of many gods, then these personalities were either not prophets or their teachings have been manipulated later. It is, indeed, a hard reality that the teachings of all prophets prior to Prophet Muhammad (saw) have been altered and, in many cases, their holy scriptures too have been tampered with.

THE LAST PROPHET - MUHAMMAD (saw)

There is an amazing and precious fact! That fact is: All prophets and Holy Scriptures prophesied the coming of a last and final prophet. These prophets also instructed and their scriptures mentioned that once this final prophet appears and is recognized (through certain signs), people must accept him and his scripture and code of religion which he brings, and give up all earlier religious laws.

But, there is another amazing fact here! This fact is that despite major changes in all previous holy books, the forecasts about the coming of the last prophet could not be tampered with. God did not allow it. These forecasts exist in all holy books today. This very fact is, by itself, an open proof of the truth of Islam. Why did this happen (preservation of these forecasts in holy books)? This happened so that none can stand up and give excuses on D-Day (Judgment Day) and say, “I did not know (about the coming of the last prophet)”.

This last prophet - Muhammad (saw) - has been called ‘Naraashans” in the Vedas, ‘Mahammad’ in the Bhavishya Purana, ‘Kalki-Avtaar’ in the Puranas, ‘Parakletos’ in the Bible and the ‘Last Buddha’ in Buddhist scriptures. The date, time and place of Prophet Muhammad’s birth and many other signs related to him, have been mentioned in these holy books.

PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S LIFE - AN INTRODUCTION

About 1400 years ago, that last Prophet Muhammad was born in the city of Makkah in Saudi Arabia. His father died before his birth. His mother too did not live long. His grandfather and, later, his uncle raised him. Soon, this most extra-ordinary person of the world became the apple of the eyes of the Makkans. Their love for him grew as he grew up. He was popularly known as 'The truthful' and 'the trustworthy'. The people would deposit their valuables with him (as in a bank). They would invite him to arbitrate in their disputes.

An interesting incident took place once. The Kabah, the sacred mosque of God, was being renovated. A sacred stone lay in its corner. Due to its sanctity, all the Makkan tribes and their leaders wished to get the honour of installing this stone themselves. Matters came to a head, and swords were drawn. Just then, a sensible man came up with a solution to the impasse. He suggested that the first person to enter the Kabah should settle the dispute. The crowds agreed. Lo and behold! The first to arrive at the Kabah just then was Prophet Muhammad! The people cried out in one voice, "This is just fine! The 'truthful and trustworthy' has arrived, and we are pleased."

The Prophet broke the stand-off in an ingenious way. He rolled out a sheet of cloth on the ground and himself lifted the stone, placing it on the cloth. He then asked all leaders of the various tribes to come forth and hold the hem of the cloth and lift it. When these leaders reached the Kabah's wall carrying the cloth with the stone in it, the Prophet lifted the stone and installed it in its original spot. He thus averted a near - blood-bath.

As a norm, the people consistently involved him prominently in their affairs. They would become upset and restless in his absence when he travelled, and would weep inconsolably when he returned.

In those days, 360 idols and statues of deities were installed in the Kabah. Arabia overflowed with evils like castes, social divisions, oppression and suppression of women, alcoholism, gambling, usury, conflicts, violence, adultery, etc.

When Prophet Muhammad was 40, God began sending down the Quran to him through an angel and also gave him the glad tidings of having appointed him as a Prophet of God. God, now, conferred on him the responsibility of inviting people to monotheism or worship of One God only.

THE VOICE OF TRUTH

Prophet Muhammad stood atop a hill. His voice rang out in the still desert air as he called out to the people. The people responded. They had recognized the familiar voice. It was the voice of 'the truthful' and 'the trustworthy'. Promptly, they rushed to the bottom of the hill.

From the crest of the hill, the Prophet asked them, "Will you believe me if I inform you that a vast army is approaching behind this hill and is about to attack you?"

The people echoed back, "How can we not believe you? You never lie or deceive. Moreover, you are in an elevated position up there and can see the other side of the hill from atop."

Thereupon, the Prophet invited the people to Islam and cautioned them against idol-worship. He warned them about the fires of hell after death. He tried to impress upon them that they could not see those fires just as they could not see the other side of the hill from below while he could see it from his elevated position on the hill-top.

A HUMAN WEAKNESS

It is a human shortcoming that a person emulates even those fallacious beliefs and actions of his forefathers which are wide off the mark .He does so despite the fact that his own logical mind and other evidence refutes the validity or correctness of these ideas and actions. Despite this, he persists with the practices of his ancestors. Far from examining or refuting these practices, he does not tolerate a word against them.

ROAD-BLOCKS AND TRIALS

This human shortcoming, above-mentioned, was the very reason why the very people of Makkah who had honoured and trusted the Prophet for 40 years and had titled him ‘The Truthful’, suddenly became his worst enemies. The more he invited them to this single truth (of monotheism), the more vehemently and violently they opposed him. Some of them persecuted his followers who believed him. They assaulted them, strapped their necks, dragging and stoning them. They pinned down many believers on burning coals. Despite all this, the Prophet took no revenge. He harboured no vindictive or negative feelings for his persecutors but only prayed for their guidance.

Once, disheartened and disappointed with his own people of Makkah, he visited the nearby town of Taif. There, the people derided him. They set young pranksters after him. These truants ran after him, abused and stoned him until his feet bled. When he would sit down in exhaustion, these boys would raise him up forcibly, only to stone him again. He left the town. On the outskirts, he sat down to gather his breath. He did not curse them. Instead, he supplicated to God with these words: “O Lord! Grant them understanding, for they know not.”

Ultimately, he was compelled to bid farewell to his beloved city of Makkah for the only fault that he had conveyed God’s pure words – the Quran – to the people there. Subsequently, he migrated to the city of Madina. However, the Makkan armies attacked him there too repeatedly.

THE TRIUMPH OF TRUTH

Truth always wins. It won here too. After going through the grind for 23 years, victory finally embraced the Prophet. His sincere and selfless appeals and invitation to the truth touched the deepest chords of hearts. A flood of affirmations poured in from across the length and breath of the lands around him. Entire Arabia entered the cool shade of Islam, and a revolution swept across the entire world, thereafter.

THE FINAL WILL

Some time before his death, Prophet Muhammad performed the pilgrimage of Haj along with 1,25,000 people. There, during the Haj, he announced his famous final will and parting exhortation. He said, "O People! After you die, you will be questioned about me as to whether I conveyed God's religion and the truth to you. What will you say?"

The surging crowds responded, "We bear witness that, without doubt, you have conveyed it."

He raised his finger towards the heavens and said thrice, "O God, be Thou Witness, be Thou Witness, be Thou Witness."

Thereupon, the Prophet announced, "Those of you whom this true religion has reached, must convey it to those whom it has not yet reached. Let him who is present; convey it unto him who is absent."

He also stated that there will be no prophet after him, that he was the last prophet – the

'Narashans', the 'Antim-Avtaar', the 'last Buddha', the 'Parakletos', the 'Kalki-Avtaar' whom people had been awaiting and about whom they knew all details and signs.

The Quran says:

"Those to whom We gave the Scripture (Jews and Christians) recognize him (Prophet Muhammad) as they recognize their sons. But, doubtless, a group of them conceal the truth while they know it (i.e., that he is the last prophet prophesied in all holy books)." (Quran-2-146)

EVERY SOUL'S OBLIGATION

It is now the bounden duty and a religious and human obligation upon every human soul till Doomsday, to worship One God, not to attach partners to Him, to accept His last Prophet Muhammad as the true prophet and follow the code and way of life brought by him. Doing this is called faith or Imaan. Without faith or Imaan, a person will burn in hell eternally after death.

SOME QUESTIONS

Some questions may crop up in your mind. For instance – Why at all should we believe in going to heaven or hell after death when we can't see heaven or hell? In this regard, it will be most relevant to note that all ancient scriptures hold a vivid description of heaven and hell. This goes to prove that the concept of heaven and hell exists in all religions.

This can be better understood by a simple example: Someone tells a baby inside the mother's womb, "Now look here, when you are out of here, you will get milk, you will cry and you will see many other things too."

The baby may not believe this while he is still inside the womb. But no sooner does he emerge from the womb; he finds all those things which were told to him, to be true and right in front of his eyes. Our world too is in a state of pregnancy. When a person emerges from it after death, he opens his eyes in the next world and, like that new-born baby, finds all the things said to him to be true and very much in front of him.

A RIDDLE

Another question that might puzzle the mind can be: If all religions and religious scriptures are true, then why is it important to believe in and accept Islam? The answer to this poser is simple, especially if seen in the light of today's system in the modern world. Take the example of our own country. We have a parliament and a constitution. We also had a string of Prime ministers like Nehru, Shastri, Indira Gandhi, Charan Singh, Rajiv Gandhi, V.P.Singh, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, etc.

Each one was a Prime minister in his own right. Each of them introduced come changes and laws in response to the need of his time, and these became an integral part of the country's law. Now any change made in this law by the present Prime minister and his cabinet will

automatically abrogate the related previous law on the same subject. It becomes mandatory for the citizens to accept this new, changed law. Now, if someone were to object and say that since Indira Gandhi was also a Prime minister, hence he will obey only the laws made by her and not the new laws framed by the new Prime minister, then obviously such a person would be taken as an enemy of the State and would incur indictment and punishment.

In the same manner, all religions and all religious texts appeared in their own times and each, in its own right, taught the same truth (of monotheism). But, now it is imperative for a person to believe in the last Prophet Muhammad and follow the final code of religion brought by him while, at the same time, believing and accepting all previous prophets and religions to be true. (Moreover, previous prophets were sent to their own people for their own times but Prophet Muhammad, being the last Prophet, has been sent for all mankind and for all times).

TRUE RELIGION IS ONLY ONE

It is plain now that it is not correct to say that all religions lead a person to God or that only the paths (religions) are different while the goal is common. The reality is that truth is only one. Falsities can be many. Light can be only one continuous spectrum of unbroken radiance. Yes, light can be only one. Darkness and its shadows can be many! True religion, too, is only one. It was always one from the very dawn of time. And to believe in that one religion and only that religion, is Islam.

Religion never changes. It is only the internal laws (religious code) that changed with the times. And, these laws were changed only through God's guidance sent through prophets. When mankind is one species, our Lord God is also One, then the true path is also one. The Quran says: "The religion from God is only Islam."

AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION

Yet another question could tug at your mind: Where is the proof that Prophet Muhammad is God's true prophet and also the last prophet? The answer is plain and the proof is glaring:

1. The first proof is God's own declaration that Prophet Muhammad is his true and last prophet. God announced this through His Word - the Quran. The Quran is the word of God. Now, to prove that the Quran is the word of God, in the first place, the Quran itself has given evidences and arguments as mentioned earlier. These arguments have been upheld and stood their ground as none of these could be refuted till date. It is this true book that has announced that Prophet Muhammad is the true and final prophet of God.

2. The second proof is the very person of Prophet Muhammad. Every moment of his life is on record and exposed to the world. His entire life is but an open history book. No other man's life and times have been thus chronicled and rolled our before the world as Prophet Muhammad's life. His own sworn enemies and anti-Islamic historians too never alleged that he ever lied even in his private life about anything or anyone. His own countrymen swore to his honesty and integrity. How such a person who never lied in private, tell cans lies in the matter of religion and God? This true Prophet himself conveyed that he was the last prophet and that no prophet would come after him. He also did not give any prophecy (about any prophet after him).

3. The third proof is: - the Holy Scriptures of all religions. All religious scriptures contain prophecies about a last prophet, a last 'Rishi' 'Antim Rishi', 'Narashans', 'Kaliki-Avtar' and 'Muhammad' in Hindu scriptures (and by his own name and other names in Christian, Buddhist and other scriptures mentioned earlier) The signs of this last

prophet (by which he can be recognized) have also been detailed in all these holy books, and they conform to Prophet Muhammad only.

PANDIT VED PRAKASH UPADHYAY

Pandit Ved Prakash Upadhyay (an expert on Holy Scriptures) has written that a person who does not accept Islam and does not believe in Prophet Muhammad (saw) and his religion is, actually, not a Hindu. The reason for this is that the Hindu scriptures have clearly instructed the people to accept the religion of Kalki-Avtar, the Narashans whenever he appears on this earth (just as other scriptures have instructed people to accept the last prophet).

Hence, any Hindu who truly believes in his own religious scriptures but does not believe in the Kalki-Avtar and his teachings will burn in hell-fire after death forever. There, he will be deprived of the sight of God. Rather, he will suffer God's wrath. (Similarly, a person of any other religion too cannot be a true believer and follower of his own religion until and unless he believes and follows this last Prophet Muhammad because his own holy book has prophesied his coming and also instructs him to follow this last prophet.)

FAITH - A NEED

Come to think of it, faith is essential not only for the life after death but is needed in this world and this life too. It is a case of conscience, an obligation on man to worship One God. Anyone who deviates and parts company with God, and bows and kneels to others, is worse than an animal. Why? Even a dog lies faithfully only at his own Master's door and pins all hopes on him alone. What a man is he who abandons his own true Master and Lord and bows away, right and left, here and there, at every other door!!

However, the hard fact is that a person needs faith more after death from where he will never return. There, he will not get a second death even if he were to beg for it. There, regrets and remorse will prove futile. If a man departs from this world without faith, then he will smoulder and burn in the consuming fires of hell without a break, forever. What happens when a tiny flame merely brushes us for a moment? We cry out in pain. How then will we be able to stand a blazing fire which is 70 times hotter than this world's fire, and in which one will be roasted alive perpetually? There, when the skin will be burnt to a cinder, a new skin will at once replace it, to be burnt and replaced again. This process will be repeated continually. (Today, we know that pain - receptors are in the skin and the skin feels maximum pain) The torment of burning will be uninterrupted.

DEAR READERS!

My Dear Readers! We have no clue as to when death will strike. We are not sure even if we will be able to exhale the breath we have just inhaled or if we will be able to breathe in a new breath. Before death catches up with you, there is still a chance. Know and feel your foremost and supreme obligation. Without faith, neither is this present life a life worth the name nor will the post-death life be a worthy life.

Tomorrow, we will be ushered into our Lord's Presence. There, the first question to be asked of us will be about faith. I have my own personal end too in this matter: On D-Day, that is, Judgment Day, I do not wish that you turn around and say, "I did not know. This fact was never conveyed to me."

I trust that these sincere and true words have found a place in your heart. Then, come O Noble Soul, You my dear friend, possessor of a true heart and a true soul, come and make the Lord a Witness. With such a true heart as is acceptable to the Knower of hearts, come, acknowledge and pledge that –

Shahadah in Arabic

"Ash-hadu-an-la-ilaha-illallah-wa-ash-hadu-anna-Muhammadan-abduhu-wa-rasooluhu."

Translation: "I testify that there is no God except the One God and I testify that Muhammad is the servant and Prophet of God."

"I repent and turn away from rejection of God and I turn away from attaching partners to God. I turn away from all types of sins. I take a pledge that I will comply with the commands of my true Master and God Who has created me. I will also sincerely follow His true Prophet Muhammad."

May God the Kind and Merciful keep you and me steadfast on this path until our last breath. Amen.

My Dear Friend! If you spend your life along with this belief and faith until the knock of death, then and only then will you realize and appreciate how this brother of yours has fulfilled the call of love for you.

A TEST OF FAITH

It is quite possible that you could be tested on account of your faith. But – truth always wins. In this world too, truth is destined to win the day. However, if some trials do happen to come your way, then go through them with the thought that life in this world is transient and meant to last only for a few days. The trials are a cipher, a shadow, a straw and too insignificant in the face of the comforts, luxuries, bliss and unimaginable pleasures of paradise forever and ever after death. And, of-course, the trials are nothing in comparison to gaining God's pleasure and viewing Him face to face.

YOUR CALL

A matter of exceptional importance stands out now. This truth, this faith, is the right and 'trust' of every other soul whom this 'right' has not yet reached. Hence, it is an obligation upon you too to pass forward this truth, this 'trust and right', much like a legacy, to those others to whom it belongs and who have not yet heard of it. You need to do this in all sincerity, good-will and well-meaning sympathy with the only end to save a brother or a sister from God's wrath and from the fire and torments of hell.

Perform this 'labour of love' with a deep sense of compassion. Hand over the truth to others just as the dear Prophet did. At the same time, pray to God for their guidance, that they may realize and recognize the straight, true path.

Imagine, for a moment, this scene: A man is pacing near a blazing pit of fire. Just then, he sees a visually challenged man strolling ahead of him. This blind man, unaware of the pit of fire ahead, strays towards its edge and falls over it into the pit. The person behind has been watching him calmly all this while. He does not move. He neither calls out to the man, even once, to caution him nor does he move forward to hold him back or say, "Look out! Your path leads straight into a pit of fire."

Do you think such a person deserves to be called a human being? The minimum requirement of humaneness, is to stop that blind person, hold his hands, pull him back, save him, assure and promise him thus, "As far as I can and as long as there's life in my veins, I won't let you fall in the fire."

The point is clear. After accepting faith, every Muslim who has received the guidance of faith, the Prophet and the Quran, becomes duty-bound to do one thing. This 'one thing' is to set about the task of salvaging and extricating those souls who are still entangled and caught

up in the fire of polytheism, who are attaching partners to God and are rejecting God (His Oneness).

Hold the hands of such people, or their feet if need be. Plead with them so that they adopt faith and do not keep blundering up the wrong path, following the wrong scent.

It is a fact that words coming from the depths of a sincere heart, words flowing with compassion and selflessness, surely touch and move another heart. It's a 'heart-to-heart' matter. Even if a single person gains faith and finds God's real, true door through you, then you are truly exonerated and stand vindicated. Indeed, then, you have truly worked the oracle. And that is exactly why God is so pleased with him who draws away another soul from polytheism (Shirk) and rejection of God (Kufr) and directs him onto the highway of truth.

Assume, for a while, that your own son has revolted against you and has joined the enemy ranks. Suddenly, a Good Samaritan turns up from nowhere. He counsels your son and, eventually, transforms your son back to his loyal, obedient self, and your son returns to you. How pleased would you be with that noble man who brought back your son to your fold! In much the same way, Our Lord God is singularly pleased when someone becomes a medium in conveying faith to another soul, and disperses the spark of faith further and further on, in every hole and corner and onto the four winds.

IN THE AFTER – GLOW OF FAITH

After accepting Islam and becoming the true servant of the true Lord and Master, you need to do certain things. To offer the five daily prayers, becomes your first duty. Learn them. Offer them. These prayers will radiate peace in your soul and will enhance your love for God. In the month of Ramazan, you must fast. If you are wealthy, you must contribute a part of your wealth to the needy, for that is their

share. Finally, if you can afford it, you must go for the pilgrimage of Haj once in a life-time.

Beware! Watch out! Now, your head must not bow before anyone except God. You now need to steer clear of all prohibited things like alcohol, gambling, usury, pork, bribes, etc. However, you may freely enjoy all those pure gifts of God which He has made permissible.

You have, now, to read daily that pure Word of God, the Quran. You must also observe the ways of purification and hygiene. You must pray from the depths of your heart and soul for your friends, family and relatives and for all men and women walking on this earth, that they may live and die with faith because faith alone is the first and last anchor of human civilization and society.

In the dimly-lit corridors of times gone by, there once stood a great prophet of God. He was Prophet Ibrahim. In an incident, he was forced into a fire. He walked into the flames but not a hair of his was harmed! This was due to his faith. Today too, the power of faith can transform a fire into blossoms and can ward off any obstacle in the way of the true, glowing path.

If the faith of Ibrahim / could stir our hearts again
Fire and flames and embers all / would turn to flowers again.

Peace be upon you.

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